

<i>The meditative absorption that is newly attained</i>	<i>Meditative absorption(s) which are attained previous to the newly attained meditative absorption</i>	<i>The preparatory stage that precedes the newly attained meditative absorption and causes its attainment</i>
First concentration	The preparatory stage of the first concentration
Second concentration	The first concentration	The preparatory stage of the second concentration
Third concentration	The first and second concentrations	The preparatory stage of the third concentration
Fourth concentration	The first, second, and third concentrations	The preparatory stage of the fourth concentration
Limitless space	The first, second, third, and fourth concentrations	The preparatory stage of limitless space
Limitless consciousness	The four concentrations and limitless space	The preparatory stage of limitless consciousness
Nothingness	The four concentrations, limitless space, and limitless consciousness	The preparatory stage of nothingness
Peak of cyclic existence	The four concentrations, limitless space, limitless consciousness, and nothingness	The preparatory stage of the peak of cyclic existence

The preparatory stage of the first concentration consists of further sub-stages (which will be explained in detail during one of the later topics of the *Ornament*). Those sub-stages are awarenesses that meditate on their particular objects of meditation while some of them serve as '*mundane* uninterrupted paths' with which meditators gradually and temporarily eliminate the nine types of *mundane* innate afflictions that pertain to the Desire Realm (big-big, medium-big, small-big, etc. *mundane* innate afflictions of the Desire Realm). These nine types of *mundane* innate afflictions of the Desire Realm are temporarily eliminated because they prevent the arising of the first concentration. Please note that for such temporary elimination one does not have to enter a Buddhist path or even be a Buddhist.

The attainment of the temporary *cessation* of these nine types of afflictions marks the first moment of the first concentration itself. Thus, when meditators achieve the first concentration, *mundane* innate afflictions that pertain to the Desire Realm do not arise in their continua for as long as the first concentration does not degenerate. Yet since the *mundane* uninterrupted paths of the preparatory stage are not able to eliminate the *seeds* of the *mundane* innate afflictions of the Desire Realm, these afflictions arise again when the first concentration degenerates (which is why the elimination is merely temporary). Examples of *mundane* innate afflictions that pertain to the Desire Realm are *mundane* innate attachment to the sense objects of the Desire Realm, innate anger, etc.

Anger is one of the coarsest afflictions; it is always non-virtuous, and necessarily pertains to the Desire Realm. Therefore, there is no anger that pertains to any of the Higher Realms, which means that a meditator who has attained only the first concentration is unable to experience even the slightest resentment for as long as his meditative absorption does not degenerate. Attachment, on the other hand, does not necessarily pertain to the Desire Realm, for it possesses greater levels of subtlety and is not always non-virtuous.

Therefore there is attachment that pertains to the Desire Realm, the First Concentration Level, the Second Concentration Level, and so forth.

However, a meditator who attained the first concentration and temporarily removed the nine types of mundane innate afflictions of the Desire Realm is still not free from the *supramundane* innate afflictions of the Desire Realm. An example of a supramundane innate affliction of the Desire Realm is the innate ignorance of the Desire Realm that perceives an inherently existent self.

Supramundane innate afflictions of the Desire Realm can only be eliminated by cultivating Hinayana or Mahayana paths of meditation. However, supramundane innate afflictions of the Desire Realm are not as coarse as mundane afflictions and therefore do not inhibit the meditator's first concentration.

Furthermore, with the attainment of the first concentration and thus the temporary removal of mundane innate afflictions of the Desire Realm, mundane and supramundane innate afflictions of the First Concentration Level can manifest. These are more subtle than afflictions of the Desire Realm, and cannot arise *before* the attainment of the first concentration.

Having achieved the first concentration, meditators may then attempt to attain the second concentration. The ability of the second concentration to abide single-pointedly on one object while engaging in subtle analysis is even greater than of the first concentration (it increases further with every subsequent meditative absorption). The second concentration is also preceded by a preparatory stage, some of the sub-stages of which consist of mundane uninterrupted paths that gradually and temporarily eliminate the nine types of the mundane innate afflictions that pertain to the *First Concentration Level* (i.e. big-big, medium-big, small-big, etc. mundane innate afflictions of the *First Concentration Level*). Therefore, meditators who train to attain the second concentration first gradually cultivate the different sub-stages of the preparatory stage of the second concentration, and use the mundane uninterrupted paths of those sub-stages to gradually and temporarily eliminate the nine types of mundane innate afflictions of the First Concentration Level. The first moment of the temporary *cessation* of these afflictions marks the first moment of the second concentration. This means that for as long as the second concentration does not degenerate, mundane innate afflictions of the First Concentration Level cannot arise anymore.

Nonetheless, *supramundane* innate afflictions of the Desire Realm and the First Concentration Level can still arise. Also, with the attainment of the second concentration *mundane* and *supramundane* afflictions that pertain to the *Second Concentration Level* can arise. But since they are subtler and fewer in number than the afflictions that have been temporarily eliminated they do not inhibit the second concentration.

In this way, meditators may gradually cultivate the remaining meditative absorptions until they reach the 'peak of cyclic existence' which is an extremely absorbed and subtle mind. It is the highest mundane awareness one can attain within Samsara.

Regarding its cultivation, similar to the other meditative absorptions, the peak of cyclic existence absorption is also preceded by a preparatory stage some of the sub-stages of which temporarily eliminate the nine types (big-big, medium-big, small-big, etc.) of mundane innate afflictions that pertain to the Nothingness Level. Once the temporary *cessation* of these afflictions is achieved the meditator attains the last of the eight absorptions.

The afflictions that arise in the continuum of someone who has attained such an absorption are the supramundane innate afflictions that pertain to the levels below the Peak of Cyclic Existence Level (the Desire Realm, First Concentration Level, etc. up until the Nothingness Level) as well as the supramundane afflictions of the Peak of Cyclic Existence Level.

Please note that since there is no mundane uninterrupted path above the peak of cyclic existence the innate afflictions that pertain to the Peak of Cyclic Existence Level are all supramundane, for they cannot be temporarily eliminated by mundane paths but only irrevocably eliminated by (Hinayana or Mahayana) supramundane uninterrupted paths of the path of meditation.

In brief, with the attainment of each of the absorptions, a meditator temporarily overcomes mundane innate afflictions that pertain to any of the levels *below* the respective absorption, and only the *supramundane* afflictions of those lower levels remain.

Also, corresponding to the highest meditative absorption the meditator has attained, *mundane* and *supramundane* afflictions that pertain to the level of that absorption can arise in his continuum (the only exception is the Peak of Cyclic Existence since the afflictions that pertain to its level are necessarily supramundane), while mundane and supramundane innate afflictions that pertain to a higher level cannot manifest.